

HOW TO SURVIVE IN ENEMY TERRITORY



**By President
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We celebrate 100 years of seminary in the Church. I hold on to a thread that goes back to the early days when the resources for this program were very scarce.

From those humble beginnings, we now have 375,008 students in seminary classes in 143 countries with over 38,000 volunteer and full-time teachers worldwide. We invest much in our youth. We know of your worth and your potential.

Wisdom Will Help You Combat the Enemy

I speak as one who has seen the past and would prepare you for the future.

You are growing up in enemy territory. When you become mature spiritually, you will understand how the adversary has infiltrated the world around you. He is in homes, entertainment, the media, language—everything around you. In most cases, his presence is undetected.

I want to tell you that which will be of most worth and most desirable. The scriptures say, “Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get

wisdom,” and I would add, “with all [your] getting get [going!]”¹ I do not have time to waste and neither do you. So listen up!

The moment I decided to be a teacher is very clear in my mind. During World War II, I was in my early 20s and a pilot in the Air Force. I was stationed on the little island of Ie Shima. This island, a small, lonely one about as big as a postage stamp, is just off the northern tip of Okinawa.

One lonely summer evening, I sat on a cliff to watch the sun go down. I was pondering what I would do with my life after the war, if I was fortunate enough to survive. What did I want to be? It was on that night that I decided I wanted to be a teacher. I reasoned that teachers are always learning. Learning is a basic purpose of life.

I first taught seminary in 1949 in Brigham City. I had been a student in that seminary in my high school days.

There were three courses originally taught in seminary: Old Testament, New Testament, and Church History. It was my privilege to add an early-morning class on the Book of Mormon. I had returned from the war with a testimony of the Book of Mormon and an understanding of how the gift of the Holy Ghost operates.

The Gift of the Holy Ghost Will Protect You in Enemy Territory

You have been taught all of your lives about the gift of the Holy Ghost, but teaching can only go so far. You can and, in fact, you must go the rest of the way alone to discover within yourself how the Holy Ghost can be a guiding and protective influence.

For young men and young women, the process is the same. Discovering how the Holy Ghost operates in your life is the quest of a lifetime. Once you have made that discovery for yourself, you can live in enemy territory and will not be deceived or destroyed. No member of this Church—and that means each of you—will ever make a serious mistake without first being warned by the promptings of the Holy Ghost.

Sometimes when you have made a mistake, you may have said afterward, “I knew I should not have done that. It did not feel right,” or perhaps, “I knew I *should* have done that. I just did not have the courage to act!” Those impressions are the Holy Ghost attempting to direct you

toward good or warning you away from harm.

There are certain things that you must not do if the lines of communication are to remain open. You cannot lie or cheat or steal or act immorally and have those channels remain free from disruption. Do not go where the environment resists spiritual communication.

You must learn to seek the power and direction that is available to you, and then follow that course no matter what.

First on your “to do” list, put the word *prayer*. Most of the time, your prayers will be silent. You can think a prayer.

You can always have a direct line of communication with your Father in Heaven. Do not allow the adversary to convince you that no one is listening on the other end. Your prayers are always heard. You are never alone!

Take care of your body. Be clean. “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?”²

Read carefully the promises found in section 89 of the Doctrine and Covenants. The Word of Wisdom does not promise perfect health but that the spiritual receptors within you might be strengthened.

Stay away from tattoos and similar things which deface your body. Your body was created in God’s image.

Prophetic Counsel Teaches What Is True

I want to speak now in the pattern of straight talk about another matter.

We know that gender was set in the premortal world.³ “The spirit and the body are the soul of man.”⁴ This matter of gender is of great concern to the Brethren, as are all matters of morality.

A few of you may have felt or been told that you were born with troubling feelings and that you are not guilty if you act on those temptations. Doctrinally we know that if that were true, your agency would have been erased, and that cannot happen. You always have a choice to follow the promptings of the Holy Ghost and live a morally pure and chaste life, one filled with virtue.

President Gordon B. Hinckley announced the following in general conference: “People inquire about our position on those who consider themselves . . . gays and lesbians. My response is that we love them as sons and daughters



Do not squander these years of seminary instruction. Take advantage of the great blessing you have to learn the doctrines of the Church and the teachings of the prophets. Learn that which is of most worth.



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of God. They may have certain inclinations which are powerful and which may be difficult to control. Most people have [temptations] of one kind or another at various times. If they do not act upon these inclinations, then they can go forward as do all other members of the Church. If they violate the law of chastity and the moral standards of the Church, then they are subject to the discipline of the Church, just as others are.

“We want to help . . . strengthen them, to assist them with their problems and to help them with their difficulties. But we cannot stand idle if they indulge in immoral activity, if they try to uphold and defend and live in a so-called same-sex marriage situation. To permit such would be to make light of the very serious and sacred foundation of God-sanctioned marriage and its very purpose, the rearing of families.”⁵

President Hinckley was speaking for the Church.

Use Your Agency to Keep or Regain Safe Ground

The first gift that Adam and Eve received was agency: “Thou mayest choose for thyself, for it is given unto thee.”⁶

You have that same agency. Use it wisely to deny acting on any impure impulse or unholy temptation that may come into your mind. Just do not go there, and if you are already there, come back out of it. “Deny yourselves of all ungodliness.”⁷

Do not tamper with the life-giving powers in your body alone or with members of either gender. That is the standard of the Church, and it will not change. As you mature, there is a temptation to experiment or explore immoral activities. Do not do that!

The key word is *discipline*—self-discipline. The word *discipline* comes from the word

disciple or *follower*. Be a disciple/follower of the Savior, and you will be safe.

One or two of you may be thinking, “I am already guilty of this or that serious mistake. It is too late for me.” It is never too late.

You have been taught at home and in seminary about the Atonement of Jesus Christ. The Atonement is like an eraser. It can wipe away guilt and the effect of whatever it is that is causing you to feel guilty.

Guilt is spiritual pain. Do not suffer from chronic pain. Get rid of it. Be done with it. Repent, and, if necessary, repent again and again and again and again until you—not the enemy—are in charge of you.

Lasting Peace Comes by Repenting Often

Life turns out to be a succession of trials and errors. Add “repent often” to your list of things to do. This will bring you lasting peace that cannot be purchased at any earthly price. Understanding the Atonement may be the one most important truth that you can learn in your youth.

If you are associating with others who drag you down instead of building you up, stop and change company. You may be alone and lonely at times. The important question may be asked then, “When you are alone, are you in good company?”

Unwinding a habit that you have allowed to entangle you can be difficult. But the power is in you. Do not despair. The Prophet Joseph Smith taught that “all beings who have bodies have power over those who have not.”⁸ You can resist temptation!

It is not likely that you will ever have a personal encounter with the adversary; he does not show himself that way. But even if he came personally to you to test and tempt you, you have an advantage. You can assert your agency, and he will have to leave you alone.

Take Advantage of the Blessings of Seminary

You are not ordinary. You are very special. You are exceptional. How do I know that? I know that because you were born at a time and in a place where the gospel of Jesus Christ can come into your life through the teachings and activities of your home and of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. It is, as the Lord Himself has said, “the only true and living church upon the face of the whole earth.”⁹

There are other things we could add to the list, but you know what you should and should not be doing in your life. You know right and wrong and do not need to be commanded in all things.

Do not squander these years of seminary instruction. Take advantage of the great blessing you have to learn the doctrines of the Church and the teachings of the prophets. Learn that which is of most worth. It will bless you and your posterity for many generations to come.

Not many years will pass until you are married and have children, a marriage that should be sealed in the temple. Our prayer is that you will find yourself, in due time, safely settled in a family ward or branch.

Go Forward with Hope and Faith

Do not fear the future. Go forward with hope and faith. Remember that supernal gift of the Holy Ghost. Learn to be taught by it. Learn to seek it. Learn to live by it. Learn to pray always in the name of Jesus Christ.¹⁰ The Spirit of the Lord will attend you, and you will be blessed.

We have deep and profound faith in you.

I bear my testimony to you—a witness that came to me in my youth. And you are no different from anyone else than I am. You have as much right to that testimony and witness as anyone. It will come to you if you earn it. I invoke the blessings of the Lord upon you—the blessings of that witness to be in your life, to guide you as you make a happy future. **NE**

From a seminary centennial broadcast address given on January 22, 2012.

NOTES

1. Proverbs 4:7.
2. 1 Corinthians 3:16.
3. See “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 129; see also Moses 3:5; Abraham 3:22–23.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 88:15.
5. Gordon B. Hinckley, “What Are People Asking about Us?” *Ensign*, Nov. 1998, 71.
6. Moses 3:17.
7. Moroni 10:32.
8. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 211.
9. Doctrine and Covenants 1:30.
10. See 3 Nephi 18:19–20.

